

A
SERMON
Preached before the
Queen Dowager,
IN
Her *MAJESTIES* Chappel at
SOMERSET-HOUSE,
Upon St. Stephen's Day.

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of the H. Order of St. *Benedict*, and of the
English Congr. Chaplain and Preacher in Or-
dinary to their Majesties.

Published by Her Majesties Command.

L O N D O N:

Printed by *Henry Hills*, Printer to the King's Most Excellent
Majesty, for his Household and Chappel. 1687.



25 '40

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Acts 6. 8.

Stephanus plenus gratia & fortitudine faciebat prodigia & signa magna in populo.

Stephen full of Grace and courage did great Wonders and signs among the people.

IT seems to be the intention of the Church (Sacred Majesty) amidst her Transports of Joy for the word made Flesh, to Crown her Emmanuel with Flowers, to imitate the Spouse in the *Canticles*, and strow the Manger with never-fading Roses and Lilies, *Leetulus noster Floridus*. The first she offers to day in the Martyrdom of St. Stephen, the other she is preparing for to morrow in the unspotted Virginity of the Beloved Disciple; and the next day you will see her twisting them into a Garland in the Feast of Holy Innocents, in whom the Rose, and the Lily embrace; Martyrdom is founded upon Innocence, and Innocence is Crown'd with Martyrdom: *Floribus ejas nec Rose, nec defensis.* Beda Serm. 18.

nec Lilia defunt, saies our English Doctor. And this I gather to have been her design in the Mysterious disposition of her Festivals; for it becomes her *Love* and *Wisdom* it should be so: her *Love*, to make her Beloved that Present which is most worthy of his acceptance, the first Copy of himself, and most resembling the Blessed Original; her *Wisdom*, to offer him as soon as he was born, the First-fruits of his Death, because he began to Die for her, as soon as he began to Live in the world a mortal life.

But there are so many remarkable, so many wonderful passages in the Martyrdom of St. Stephen, that a bare recital of them would take up my whole time, were they not so generally known and celebrated, that it would be a needless Repetition to relate them: *Martyris illius merita, nulla pars orbis ignorat.* Besides, they are so pathetically described by St. Luke in the 6. and 7. chapters of the *Acts*, that the same Holy Father professed, after they had been read to the people, they had not heard them recited, but even seen them represented before their Eyes; *audivimus non solum, sed etiam oculis spectavimus.* The time and place; his Preheminence and Ministry; his plenitude of Faith and Courage; the means and manner of his Death; the Priviledges and Testimonies of his Sanctity, both before and after it; all

*Aug. Tom. 10.
Serm. 2. de
sanctis.*

all concur to render his Martyrdom most illustrious. For the Time, it was within ten Months after the Crucifixion of our Lord ; The place was one of the greatest Theaters of the world, with a concourse of all the Inhabitants of a most populous City, where he suffered, but like his Blessed Master, *Extra portam, out of the Gate*, a Circumstance full of Mystery in the death of Christ, and of Honor in St. Stephen's ; His preeminence, that he gave the first * Instance of the Efficacy of the Blood of Christ in the contempt of Death ; his Ministry, that he was the first in the order of Charity and Relief of the poor, as St. Peter was in the Apostleship and Preaching the word : The plenitude of his Faith, in doing wonders and signs amongst the People ; and of his courage, in withstanding and baffling the learned, and patiently submitting to the fury of the ignorant and deluded Multitude ; the means of his death, by suffering upon the Depositions of false Witnesses ; the manner, being ston'd by all the people ; the Antecedent Testimonies of his Sanctity, in darting rays of Glory from his Countenance like another Moses, and seeing the Heavens open, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, as if he were coming to assist at his Conflict, and to Crown him upon the place of Victory. The Subsequent, Innumerable Miracles exhibited at his Memory, and at the

*V. Tiri. in
Chron. c. 50.*

*Hebr. 13. 12.
Act. 7. 58.*

** Si quid di-
bare inter
Martyres potest.
principius vi-
detur esse, qui
primus est.
Aug. ibid.
Serm. 5.
Act. 6. 5.*

*--8.
--10.*

--13.

Act. 7. 59.

Act. 6. 15.

7. 56.

Translation.

Translation of his Sacred Reliques, many of which St. *Augustin* relates in the 22. Book of the *City of God*, attested by men of the greatest credit, done in his own Neighbourhood, and some in the very place where he was Bishop, upon his own certain knowledge and examination, in sight of all the people; insomuch that speaking of one of them, he professes he did not think, there was any person in the whole Town, who had not seen, or heard it credibly reported, not any one who could possibly forget it. And if so great a Doctor's authority be of such weight to encourage all Christians to frequent the Shrines, and beg the Prayers of the Saints, and offer their own to Jesus Christ by their hands; what he affirms elsewhere, that we owe the Apostle of the Gentiles, a *Saul* converted into *Paul*, to the Intercession of St. *Stephen*, does abundantly attest the efficacy of their Prayers, and justify our Application to them.

Here (Beloved Christians) is a large field for a Panegyrick, many objects of Admiration; many subjects of Imitation; and since we come not here to admire, but to Learn, Let us single out those which make the most for our Example. And since the last words of dying Men, usually make the deepest impression, while I discourse in my First part of his *Fulness of Grace and Courage*, and

Aug. de Civit. Dei lib. 22. c. 8. Taken out by Erasmus, and inserted among his Sermons de Temp. Serm. 7.

Tam caramque illusstre miraculum, ut nullum arbitrer esse Hippontensem qui hoc non viderit, vel didicerit, nullum qui ullae ratione colvivisci poterit. Ibid.

and the overflow thereof in signs and wonders, and what is greater, in praying for his Enemies, I shall reserve your last Attention to the applying of all this to our selves, particularly in order to the great Evangelical Precept of forgiving Injuries. Vouchsafe to joyn your Prayers with me and for me, that I may partake of that Spirit which filled him, that your selves *may not be able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake*, and which still speaks in them who Preach Jesus Christ in the same Spirit, which first replenished the Blessed Virgin, who is now become the Angel-Guardian of the Incarnate Divinity, as she became his Mother when the Angel saluted her,

Hail full of Grace, &c.

AS the Birth of Christ is the fountain of all our happiness, so I contemplate him in the Manger of Bethleem (the Cistern of which David so much longed in spirit to drink) as that Fountain in Paradise which rose from the Earth, and watered the whole surface of it. Its first Division was into greater Rivers, and the farther it went, the more it divided into smaller Rivulets. Thus the fountain of living Waters, discharges some part of its inexhaustible store into every channel, into every Breast which is prepared to receive him; and

O si quis mihi daret potum aqua de cisterne à qua est in Bethleem, iuxta portam. 1. 2 Reg. 23. v. 15. Gen. 2. 10. compared with v. 6.

John 1. 16. and tho' we all partake of his Fulness, yet those more plentifully who are nearest the head. This was the reason of St. Stephen's extraordinary plenitude, *impletus est supra modum*: and being so near him who was full of Grace and Truth, he must needs be full of Grace and Power. They who are nearest the Sovereign, ever enjoy'd particular favors and priviledges; and particular Rewards have been ever assign'd them who stand the first shock of the Enemy, or first break into a Squadron, or mount a Breach, or interpose themselves as a Wall to defend the house of God.

Num. 25.
v. 13, 12, 13.

And if we read that Phinehas Son of Eleazar, who while the Rest were weeping, gave the first Instance of a Manly Zeal mixed with Courage, and consecrated his hands in the Blood of the Enemies of his God, deserv'd immortal Commendations from the mouth of the Divinity, and in Recompence had the sovereign Priesthood established in his house, and made hereditary to his Family; can we think there was no special Grace set apart, no special priviledge reserv'd for St. Stephen, who maintain'd the cause of Jesus Christ against a whole Nation, in the face of the Synagogue, in the face of the great Council or Sanhedrim; against the Disputations of the Learned, the terrors of the Magistrate, the Depositions of false Witnesses, and the rage of the incensed Mobile?

Mobile? Yes, he was full of Grace and Courage, *plenus gratiâ & fortitudine*: his fulness of Grace manifested it self in the greatness of his Courage; Courage is the effect of Grace, but fulness of courage is the reward for having comply'd with the fulness of Grace.

He began therefore where others end. The first notice we have of him is, that he was *full* Acts 6. 5. of *Faith and of the Holy Ghost*. With this Elogy he is set at the head of the new College of Deacons; St. Luke barely calls over their Names, assigns their Ministry in common, but appropriates the great Character to St. Stephen; *Vir plenus gratiâ, & Spiritu Sancto*. This is the first news we have of him; the first appearance he makes, shews him *full of Grace and Courage*, or as the Greek and Vulgar English render it, *full of Faith and Power*, *πλήρης πίστεως καὶ δύναμεως*. But why does the Latin Interpreter put *Grace* instead of *Faith*, and *Fortitude* instead of *Power*? Fulness of *Grace* implies more than *Faith*; and *Fortitude* signifies less than *Power*. One may have *Faith*, and at the same time be void of *Charity*, so short is *Faith* of the Plenitude of *Grace*. One may possess *Courage*, and *Fortitude*, and *Resolution*, and yet want *power* to *Execute*. Besides there is a *passive* *Courage*, which cannot in any proper sense merit the *Name of Power*. I grant the words are

almost Synonymous in the usage of Holy Writ ; *Grace* and *Faith* are indifferently used as general Names of Divine Gifts ; so *Fortitude* and *Power* signify the same thing in effect, but *Grace* is a more comprehensive word than *Faith* ; and *Fortitude* has an Energy which is not expressed in *Power*. The Pen-man therefore of the Latin Text to fill up our Proto-Martyr's Character, gives it a brightness in the very choice of his words, and styles him *full of Grace*, to shew that every *Grace* was as perfect and conspicuous in him as his *Faith* ; and to declare his power active and efficacious, he writes him full of *Fortitude* and *Courage*, *plenum gratiâ & fortitudine*.

With this Commendation he makes his first appearance in the world. No wonder then the first Action we find him doing is big with *Prodigies and Signs among the people*. He fed them in a double Capacity ; he broke to the Little one the Spiritual and Elementary Bread ; the proper function of a Deacon to provide for the double necessities of the Poor ; and when his Doctrin would not go down with them, he fed them with Miracles, *faciebat prodigia & signa magna in populo*.

But here may he seem to exceed his Commission ; for upon the Grecians Complaint that their Widows were neglected in the daily Ministrat-

stration, the Apostles, saies the Holy Text, call together the Multitude, and having premis'd how unreasonable it would be for them to leave the Word of God, and serve Tables, they ordain Deacons. But we find St. Stephen discharging both these Offices, while his hands serve the Tables, his Tongue Preaches ; and when his Tongue is silent, his hands speak Miracles ; he joyns the Apostolate to his Ministry, and like his Blessed Lord, through a plenitude of power, he commands over Nature as a Master, and thro' the plenitude of his Grace and humility he administers to his Brethren as a Servant. In fine, he Preaches as an Apostle, he serves as a Deacon, he disputes as a Divine, he reasons as a Philosopher, he rebukes as a Father, he fights as a Souldier, he looks an Angel, and dyes a Martyr.

When he disputes, neither the plausible Arguments of the Libertines, nor the craft of the Cyrenians, nor the haughty comportment and Satirical tongues of the Alexandrians, nor the Learning and acuteness of the Cilicians, nor the diffusive eloquence and flourishes of the Asians can prevail against him; On the Contrary, all of them in one Body and with united forces cannot stand the strength of his Reasons, are not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he speake. When he acts, Charity strecthes out his hands,

*surrexerunt
autem quidam
de Synagoga,
&c. v. 9.*

Dura cervice,
&c.
Act 7. 51.

Act 7. 54.

Act 6. 12.

Zeal moves his feet, the powers of Nature
ply under him, health, comforts and peace wait
upon his steps, and at his command diseases fly
away, and are no more: To his *Faith* and *Power*
nothing is incurable, but the Canker in the Jews
Breasts, nothing is inflexible, but their stiff-necks,
and the stone in their hearts. When he Preaches,
Moses and all the *Prophets* dwell upon his Tongue,
and his Divine *Sermon* registered *Act 7th.* de-
monstrates the Wisdom with which he was re-
plenish'd, and to which the High Priest assisted
with the whole Sanhedrim, The Doctors, Scribes
and Pharisees, that is, the Learned in both Di-
vine and Human Laws, had nothing to reply,
but *in gnashing of Teeth* and meditating Revenge,
in venting their Passion in a confus'd noise, and
stopping their Ears. And to shew they would
not be converted, tho' convinced, they prepare
to stone whom they could not confute. A dread-
full Instance that a whole Nation may be infa-
tuated, and carryed on by the Malice of a few,
who stir up the people, (commoverunt plebem) stir up
the Zealous, but undiscerning Multitude; and
even the Elders (*Seniores*) the wise and govern-
ing part of the Nation; and even the Scribes and
Divines (*Scribas*) the Learned and Religious
part of the Nation, to imbrue their hands in
Innocent Blood.

But

But oh the Saul, at whose feet they laid down their cloaths ! who, saies St. Augustin, stoned him in all their hands , omnium vestimenta servabat, & tan- quam manibus omnium lapidabat. But Blessed be God, Saul was converted. Stephen so full of Grace, was so full of Power as to Convert him : the Prayers of a Stephen converted him, saies the same Father ; For tho' the Apparition of Christ was the immediate cause of his Conversion, yet the great Doctor doubts not to affirm, that if Stephen had not Prayed for his Enemies, the Church had wanted this illustrious Convert ; *Si Stephanus sic non orasset, Ecclesia Paulum non haberet.* O the efficacious prayers of the Souls of them who were slain for the word of God, and for the Testimony which they held ! O the power of those cries which issue from under the Altar to judge and avenge their Blood ! The Revenge thele meek and Blessed Souls demand, is the filling up the number of their Fellow-servants and Brethren, that they who persecuted them may be converted, and of Enemies become their Disciples ; But they are commanded to rest yet for a little Season, till the great God Holy and True, vouchsafe to open their Eyes to Truth, and their hearts to Holyness, while the Prayers of their once detested Brethren, whose Lives and Doctrin they thought madness, and their end inglorious, vvi. 4. labour

Aug. Tom. 10.

Serm. 1. de

Sanctis, secund.

alios Fulgenii.

Ut noveritis

quantum valu-

erit oratio

sandi Stepha-

ni, recurre

nobis cum ad

illun adoles-

centem nomine

Saulum.

Aug. Serm. 4.

de sanct. &

alibi.

Revel. 6.9.

--v. 11.

Abduc tempus
modicum.

labour to facilitate their Return ; and smooth their passage , having taken away the *Thorn* in their own feet , to leave the *Rose* for theirs.

Rom. 11. 33. *O the depth of the Riches of the wisdom and knowledge , of the goodness and mercy of God ! how unsearchable are his Mercies , as well as his Judgments ! Saul disobeys , and is abandon'd ; David commits murther , and is forgiven ; Manasses*

2Kings 21.16. *sheds much innocent Blood , Sanguinem innoxium fudit multum nimis , and yet repents , and is par-*

2 Mach. 9.13. *don'd : Antiochus does the same , yet implores the Divine Mercy with many promises , and is*

Acts 5. 5. *not heard : Ananias and Sapphira tell a lye and fall dead at the Apostles feet ; Saul persecutes the Church of God , falls an Enemy to rise an*

Rom. 5. 20. *Apostle , that where Sin abounded , Grace might super-abound . Amidst such dreadful Examples who can presume ? Amidst such Instances of Mercy , who can despair ? Blessed is the Saul who has a Stephen to Pray for him , Stephen full of Grace and Power , Grace to ask , and power to obtain . Blessed is the D A V I D for whom they who fell by his hand , did at the place of Execution Pray ; could , in some measure , excuse his sins of Infirmity , at*

Psalm. 132. *least cover them , with a Memento Domine David , & omnis mansuetudinis ejus ; O Lord remember David , for his merciful Temper , and inborn Meekness . Memento Domine David . Thus Thus , O Lord ,*

Lord, Revenge the Blood of thy servants, Forgive them for they knew not what they did; Nay forgive them if they did know it; Lay not this sin to their charge. Tis the Sufferer Prays, Tis Stephen Prays, Tis *Jesus* Prays; for whose sake above all O Lord, Remember David, and all his meekness; Memento Domine David. But 'tis time I should invite you to an Imitation, and beg your Attention to my Second Part.

II PART.

Full of Grace and Courage.

THO' our Nature be such, that being extracted out of Nothing, it continually leans that way, and is sinking back to its Principle of Emptiness and not-Being, (which mov'd the Royal Prophet to term *all men mere Vanity, Universa Vanitas omnis homo,*) Yet since it has pleased the Infinite Power and Wisdom of God to give us a *Being*, and his Infinite Goodness to superadd a *Well-being*, both Nature and Grace abhor a *Vacuum*, They cannot suffer an Emptiness, either in the *Creature* or in the *Christian*. Sin empty'd the heart of Man of all that was good, and fill'd it with *Vanity*, which is but a Psal 38.6.
Criminal.

- Criminal Emptiness. Wherefore ye sons of Men, take in as much Honor, Fame, and Riches as your hearts can wish ; Indulge every appetite, Gratify every passion, Fulfil every desire ; While Honors are but opinion, Fame is but a Breath, Riches are but an Imaginary good ; While all the rest are nothing but Vanity and Sin, They are but several denominations of Emptiness. For Plenitude or Fulness, as *Macrobius*, tho' a Heathen, most Religiously observes, appertains only to Heavenly and Divine things ; and while we continue void of them, we are still Empty. *Universa Vanitas*. King *David* tells us the business of Christ coming upon Earth, is to fill up these Vacancies, *implebit ruinas, he shall*
- Psal. 109. 6. *fill our Ruines*, that is, he shall repair our Losses : and therefore the first glimpse the beloved
- John 1. 14. Apostle had of him (John 1.) *Vidimus eum quasi unigenitum à Patre, We beheld him as the only begotten Son of the Father*, that is, Full of the God-head ; *plenum Gratiâ & veritate, replenishit with Grace and Truth*, which he came to communicate to Empty Man, *and of his Fulness we have all received* ; of which fulness ? that of the God-head ? No ; That is incommunicable, *unigenitum* ; of the other then, Fulness of *Grace and Truth*.
1. Of *Grace*, the Term *St. Luke* uses in the Latin Translation, which signifies *Faith*, as the Greek

Greek has it. *zly.* Of *Truth*, which the Evangelist calls *Fortitude*, in St. Stephen, expressing the cause by the effect; for *Truth* makes us valiant, and when we possess *Truth*, it obliges us to profess it with *Courage*, it inclines us to communicate it *without Envy*, neither to be afraid with it, nor ashamed of it. *Grace* is a name amongst Divine Gifts, as *Charity* is amongst Vertues, or *Love* amongst the Passions. *Charity* according to the Apostle comprehendsevery Vertue, because it fulfils the whole Law; and St. *Austin* frequently teaches, That all the Passions are but love under other Names, and diversify'd by its effects. So does *Grace* imply *every good and perfect Gift* descending from the *Father of Lights*; Give them what appellations you please, they are still *Grace*, either *gratum faciens*, sanctifying the Receiver, or *gratis data*, in order to the Sanctification of others, as the *Gift of Miracles* and the like; that is, in the words of my Text *Grace and Power*.

Now the first Impression *Grace* makes in a Soul is that of *Faith*: without which *it is impossible* Hebr. 11. 6. to please God, that is to say, without which it is Impossible to have *Grace*. For if we approach to God by *Faith*, (*accidentem ad Deum oportet credere*) Till we believe, we are far off, we are strangers to him, we have no place in his favor, no

share in the distribution of his Grace. But if any sort of *Faith* were sufficient, there would be no distinction between Infidels and Believers; For the Infidels believe a God, so the Jew, the Turk, and the Gentile; Or if any sort of *Faith in Christ* were sufficient, there would be no distinction between Believers and Misbelievers; and yet their Sentence is very different in *Holy Writ*. Something more then is required of us than *Faith in Christ*, and this the Apostle insinuates when he exhorts us to approach unto him, *cum corde vero*,

Hebr. 10. 22. *& plenitudine fidei*, with a true heart, and in the fulness of *Faith*: Tis the Character my Text gives of St. Stephen, and yet we see it is no more than the Scripture exacts of every Christian: *In plenitudine fidei*. If our *Faith* be defective; If it be mixt with doubt, or hesitation; If our heart hold back upon account of Ease, or the Motives of human Reason, or the Suggestions of Curiosity which is never satisfy'd, our *Faith* is lame, our heart is false: We do not submit our Judgments, we do not surrender our Wills to the *Doctrin* of Christ: When he inspires *Faith*, it is whole and compleat, *Dei perfecta sunt opera*, the works of God are perfect, and therefore a defective *Faith* is not from him, and can never bring us to him; It is but the Result of human Assent and Credulity; But let us approach unto him with a true heart, and in fulness of *Faith*:

*Curiositas,
ipso cure no-
mine, inimica
securitati.*
Aug.

Faith: accedamus in vero corde, & in plenitudine Fidei.

St. Paul *Hebr. 10. 38.* tells us, The Just Man lives by Faith; from which words we cannot conclude that Faith lives of it self, for if it liv'd of it self, St. James would not tell us of a dead Faith, *Dead without works, even as the Body without the Spirit is dead;* That is, of it self it is dead, unless it be animated by *Hope*, and work by *Charity*. Faith therefore when it enjoys its *Plenitude*, is accompanied with Love, Obedience, Courage, and Resolution: and then it is truly *a fountain of life in the Breast of the Just Man*, and diffuses it self and flows into all the Faculties of his Soul and Body. It not only enlightens his mind, to confirm him in all the Truths God has reveal'd, and the Church delivers as such; but also is a Divine Warmth, which enlivens all his Motions, guides and directs all his Thoughts, forms and gives birth to all his Affections, regulates his Words, and allays his Passions.

Wherefore perfect Faith is in the Christian, what the Soul is in the *reasonable Creature*. The Soul when it comprehends, is call'd *Understanding*: when it Reflects on what is past, is call'd *Memory*; when it loves or desires, is call'd *Will*: yet these are but three Names of one Individual Soul taken from her manner of Acting. So Faith

in the Understanding is call'd *Light* ; In the Will, *Charity* ; and in the Action, *Goodness* or *Piety*. Three Natural Emanations of the same Grace, and when any one of them is wanting, it is imperfect, and cannot denominate us *full of Faith*. But this Faith particularly shews it self *ad Extra*, *Without*, in Firmness, Resolution and Courage : And therefore it is added in my Text, & *fortitudine* ; Fortitude not only to profess the Name of Christ against all opposition, and in time of Persecution, but also to support all sorts of Adversity and afflictions, quelling disgust or sorrow, and all the Motions of Impatience. It weans our hearts of this world, by raising them above it ; it makes us first contented to want the pleasures of Life, and then enables us to despise them. It strips even Death it self, of all its frightful Equi-page, and discovers it first to be a thing not evil, then not formidable, and at last desirable.

This is the Faith (Beloved Christians) God has call'd you to, a Faith which will stand the Trial, will bear the Fire and the Anvil ; such is the Courage he has inspir'd into your hearts, and expects will increase at your hands. *Nemo dicat, &c.* Says St. Austin, Let no Body pretend that in these times we have no occasions of suffering Martyrdom ; The most peaceful time of the Church never wants its Martyrs : *habet & pax nostra Martyres suos.*

fwas. For to bridle your Passion, to fly Temptations, to observe Justice, to scorn Covetousness, to check the motions of Pride, says the Father, is a great part of Martyrdom. It was not of a Stephen under a shower of Stones, or a Lawrence upon the Grid-iron St. Jerome spoke, but of a ^{Ferom. Epist. 27.} great and Noble Lady, when he wrote to Eu-^{27.} stochium, *Thy Mother was Crowned with a long Martyrdom.* For not only the Effusion of Blood does merit that style, but also the unspotted Sacrifice of a Devout mind, *is a dayly Martyrdom.* St. Bernard ^{Fer. S. 35.} Expounding those words of our Blessed Saviour, ^{in Cant.} who loves his soul, shall lose it, makes no difference between a Martyr and a Penitent; *perdet eam, siue ponendo ut Martyr, siue affligendo ut penitens.* St. John ^{V. chryost. in Epist. ad Cor. 11.} Chryostom goes yet further; Let your Eye, says ^{Hom. 11.} he, regard nothing that is Evil, and it becomes a Sacrifice, *factus est Hostia:* Let your Tongue utter nothing undecent or uncharitable, and it becomes an Oblation, *facta est oblatio:* Let your Hand commit no Injustice, and it becomes an Holocaust, *facta est Holocaustum.* Let no body therefore say, adds St Austin, There are no Martyrs in our times, ^{Aug. Serm. 2, 2. de Temp.} quotidie Martyres sunt; Both God and the Divel have their Martyrs every day. If you bear that Cross which now so much disquiets you, whether a passionate Husband, or a froward Wife, or a disobedient Child, or a querulous Neighbor; in what shape soever it appear, whether of a detracting

Quicunque ser-
vatoris manda-
ta exequuntur,
in unaquaque
actione sunt
Martyres.
Clem. Alex.
I. 4. S. 10m.

detracting Tongue, or a violent Hand, of an Im-
placable Enemy, or a false hearted Friend, provi-
ded you bear it with patience, you are a Martyr
of God ; If you murmur and repine at it, you are
a Martyr still , but of the Divel. So that in the
first you bear , and are rewarded : in the second,
One affliction draws on another, you suffer, but
in order to a greater punishment. Whatsoever, in
fine, you undergo for the Testimony of Truth
and Justice, our Lord will put to the account of
Martyrdom ; *Quicquid pro Testimonia veritatis vel*
justitiae pertulerit, totum ei Dominus pro Martyrio
compensabit. Thus lays St. Ambrose, you may every
day become a Martyr of Christ ; Thus you may
imitate St. Stephen ; Do not complain you cannot
rise to his height, by these means you draw him
down to your own Level, and by Supporting
the afflictions with Patience which are incident
to your state and condition, you enter upon his
reward, who has born the burthen and heat of the
day. We serve a God in *Pace* & in *Bello*, *eadem*
præmia victoribus tribuens, says St. Jerome , who
distributes the same rewards to every Conque-
ror , as well in Peace as in War. When we can-
not therefore undergo the *corporal Martyrdom*,
which is in the power of the Tyrant and Perse-
cutor, Let us not neglect the *Spiritual*, which is
always in our own hands. St. Bernard inquires
why we cannot drink the Chalice with the Holy
Martyrs ?

Aug. *supra*Ambr. in *Psal.*
118.Vbi *supra*.Serm. de
St. Clem.

Martyrs? We could do it, you will say, (you must say it, if you be Christians) were it necessary; but the time of persecution is over. But I profess, replies the Father, I cannot easily believe them who say so. What? do you ply every day under a familiar, under a Domestic Cross; are you contri-
stated at a hasty word, are you mov'd to passion upon every slight negligence of a Servant; are you griev'd at a disappointment, because your de-
serts and services are not considered, because you miss of a preferment, or your Inferiors are put over your heads? Do you startle at the point of a needle, and do you think you could bear the sword? *In minimis probate conflictibus, quam viriliter in majori conflictu stare possitis.* You may see in these little afflictions, how unable you would be to stand a rigorous Conflict. Who cannot the less, cannot the greater, is a Principle of Experience as well as of the Schools. If you cannot endure the gentlest hand Divine Providence can use in curing your wounds; if the Balm be too hot, if Lenitives corrode, how will you endure the lancing and searing Iron? It is not said to you now adajes, continues the same Father, Sacrifice to Idols, and you shall live; or if you will not, you shall perish by all sorts of exquisite Torments: But, *moderate your Love of your selves*; what so reasonable? *Take off your Affections from temporal things*; what so advantageous? *Watch over your Passions*; what so much

much your business ? *Relieve the poor, what so Divine ? Our Lord knows our weakness, and exempts us from severer Trials.* It is not said to you, deny Christ, but follow him ; Men's hands are not arm'd to stone you , if you Preach him, either by word or Example, but they flock to hear you, they receive the word with all Joy , and when they see your good works, they glorify your Father which is in Heaven. And do you still decline this easy combat, where you have so many assisting, and so few opposing ? You are not now born down by false Witnesses, and a popular fury, as St. Stephen was : Mens eyes are now open, they see your Innocence, and bewail that of your Brethren oppressed : They desire to see your good Works ; to take off the ill opinion they have imbib'd as well of your Practices as Doctrin. Yet you are as loose in your Behavior, as extravagant in your Dresses, as immoderate in your Expences, as licentious in your Manners, and as Censorious and uncharitable in your Words, as if your selves were the people abus'd, and had taken scandal at your own belief. Ah ! Christians , this deportment of yours , too much evinces, too much verifies the terrible Doctrin of the Fathers, that there are more who deny Christ of them who profess him, than of those who never acknowledged him ; more who renounce him without any provocation, than who desert him in the day of

of Battle, and in the fiery Trial. St. Ambrose after *Am'r. uti*
 he had cry'd out for Joy; *quanti ergo in occultis quo-*
tidie Martyres Christi sunt, &c. How many are
 there ever in the Church who daily immolate
 themselves in secrecy to Christ, and become Mar-
 tyrs by leading an innocent and penitential life?
 he breaks into tears, and another *Quanti*, How
 many have confessed him *Without*, and have since
 deny'd him *Within*? *Quanti foris confessi sunt & in-*
tus negaverunt! How many have stood the Test,
 and the Question for their Faith, who have now
 forgot their *first works*, and return'd to their old
 lives? How many have endur'd Prisons, who
 yield to every sinful occasion, and cannot hold
 out against the soft allurements of pleasure! how
 many fall by the hand of a *Dalilah*, who con-
 temn'd that of an Executioner? How many have
 we seen so full of *Grace and Courage*, as to pre-
 pare their Necks for the Axe or Gibbet, whom
 now we see staggering under, and recoiling
 from the Scourge of affliction or adversity? For
 having not prepar'd themselves for these lesser
 Trials, they become impatient upon every slight
 occasion, and while they think themselves only
 less perfect Christians, they are on a sudden
 found in the Judgment of the Apostle and of the
 Fathers Apostatizing from the Faith; *Substracio-*
nis filii, men who draw back unto perdition, lays the *Hebr. 10. 39.*
 Apostle: *intus negaverunt*, who have denied him
 within,

within, says St. Ambrose: *Sunt & Martyria in tempore pacis, sunt & negationes*, says B. Cæsarius.
 S. cæsar. Hom. 45. Tom. 2. Bibl. *Patrum.* Thus we find Martyrs in the time of peace, and thus we find them denying Christ, who once were Martyrs for him; which makes the Church breath forth her Complaints (adds St. Bernard)

Ili. 38. 17. in the words of the Prophet, *Behold in peace, is my greatest bitterness.*

But you may reply, nothing keeps our Faith awake, nothing rouses and sets an Edge upon Men's Courage, like Persecution, and therefore good Life has been ever observ'd to flourish most, when it lyes under the greatest oppression. A Storm lodges the Corn, and bends the Reeds, but it makes the Oak take root. You say true, but suppose false; you suppose you may live piously in Jesus Christ without suffering persecution; but besides the Apostles Declaration, your own experience will teach you the Contrary; and while you have still Enemies to forgive, you will find work enough for your *Faith*, matter enough to actuate your *Courage*.

There is no Passion so violent, so hard to restrain, and so difficult to overcome as that of *Revenge*, and therefore God reserv'd it to himself, knowing that in the hand of Man it could never be kept within any limits; Therefore he has affixt a special prohibition to it, and fenc'd it in as a

Rom. 12. 19. Divine Prerogative; *mihi Vindicta, Revenge is mine:* Therefore

Therefore he has forbid us the bare mention of it,
Nè dicas, say not I will recompense evil; offer not Prov. 20. 22.
 so much as to say, *I will be reveng'd.* But in a matter to which our Nature is so prone, he thought it fitting to superadd Example to Command, and therefore he pray'd for his Enemies in the very height of his sufferings, and heat of their Malice. And as if this still were not enough, lest Man might pretend, as St. Austin observes, the Example of a God to be above his Imitation, he sets us a pattern within our Reach, and upon our own Level, he enables St. Stephen to do the like; Stephen, to whom we may apply, what the Scripture says of Elias, *erit similis nobis, passibilis*, he James 5. 17. was passible, he was subject to like Passions as we are, he had his Passions like our selves, he οὐαὶ οὐαὶ οὐαὶ. had his difficulties to overcome them like other Men, and other Men have the same Grace by which he overcame them. *Attende Stephanum confervum tuum.*

*Aug. Serm. 2.
de Temp.*

*Aug. Serm.
2. S 4. de
Sand.*

But upon every slight occasion you are discompos'd, you break out into wrath, 'tis well if you are not transported to fury: and you think it a great matter if you bear with patience the ordinary occurrences of Life, or forgive those Contradictions and Ennemities which are incident to all conditions. You think it a great Victory if you do that amidst so much knowledge, such bright Examples, such vehement Exhortations,

such reasonable Motives, and such powerful assistances, all which Christian Religion abundantly furnishes, what the Heathens law to be reasonable by the light of Nature, and in some measure perform'd by the help of vain Philosophy. *But behold Stephen your fellow-servant*: Consider what provocations were given him. Never any man, except his Divine Master, had done better service to the State. His practices were as Loyal as his Principles; he was perfectly obedient to the Temporal Magistrate, and taught others to be so. As for the Spiritual Powers, he Preach'd indeed a more excellent Doctrin, a Doctrin which convinc'd them of Error, yet he treats them with respect, he stiles them *Brethren and Fathers, Viri, Fratres, & Patres, audite.* He argues from the Letter of the Law, and *Acts 7. 2.* yet is accus'd of speaking blasphemous words against it. His Evidences were so strong, and his Reasons so convincing, and his Innocence so conspicuous, that the Learnedst of them all were not able *Acts 6. 13.* to resist, or gainsay the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. Yet they charge him with Treasonable designs and wicked intentions, *They come upon him,* make him prisoner, and inform against him to the Council: *concurrentes rapuerunt eum, & adduxerunt in Concilium:* and to destroy him by forms *vv. 10.* of Law, *they set up false Witnesses, statuerunt falsos Testes.* But these false Witnesses by a special Providence

vv. 13.

vidence of God, which watches continually over the Innocent, and infatuates the Councils of the Wicked, lay the same matter of Fact to his Charge, which other profligate and mercenary Wretches swore upon Christ, *The destruction of the Temple*, and by consequence an Extirpation of the Religion.

...v. 14.

Now setting apart the Improbability of the Deposition, the vileness and prostitute Breath of the Deponents, the unconcern'dness he express'd, his Calumnies at the Barr, the respect he paid his Judges, and even the serenity of his Conscience breaking out upon his very Countenance, even when *all who sat in the great Council, look'd steadfastly on him*, they were so far from discovering any traces of Guilt, or strokes of Confusion, that *they saw his face, tanquam Vultum Angeli, as if it had been the face of an Angel*, bright, clear, open, full of assurance, and free from Passion. Add to this he had fed their poor, cur'd their sick, *done great wonders and Miracles amongst them*; all which put together might justly raise in him a greater Resentment of their Ingratitude. Yet all this, inflam'd with their Brutal fury, gnashing of Teeth, and clattering of Stones, (every one of which was a fresh provocation,) cannot hinder him from falling upon his knees, falling before he was struck down, falling to Prayer, to Prayer for those who with repeated Volleys interrupted

Acts 6. 15.

interrupted his words, and struck them out of his Mouth ; but being *full of Grace*, he pardon'd them ; and full of *Humility*, he kneel'd down to Pray for them ; and *full of Courage*, he held out till he had declar'd the fulness of his *Charity*, and set an Example to all the followers of *Christ*, *O L O R D, L A Y N O T T H I S S I N T O T H E I R C H A R G E.*

Aug. Serm. 4. de Temp. *Contra tanta & talia, tu quis es, qui non diligis ?*

And now let me see the Man who cannot forgive, who cannot love an Enemy ; who thinks much to pray for those who hate him, and to do good to those who persecute him. Shew me this Man, and I will tell him to his face, tho' he suffer innocently, yet he is not innocent : for this is the

Revel. 7. 2. Mark of the Living God, it is the Character by which we are written in the *Book of Life*, in the

Revel. 21.27. Book of the L A M B, in Libro vite Agni, that a Man should die innocent, and Pray for his Enemies, is very likely ; it is a Consequence of our Religion. But that a man should die guilty, and yet Pray for his Enemies, without confessing the guilt, is Morally impossible. For if it proceed only from Grace to forgive our Enemies ; if it be the effect of the greatest Grace to Pray for them, that Grace would irresistably oblige the offenders Conscience, were it guilty, to acknowledge the guilt. I say it is Morally impossible to Pray for those who *shed his innocent Blood*, and whom he accuses

accuses of sin for shedding it, (*Lay not this sin to their Charge,*) did he not believe it to be innocent. For otherwise we must confound the greatest effect of Grace, with the most horrible dissimulation, and allow of no distinctive sign between the works of God, and those of the Devil. I know there is a sinly Stubbornnes which looks like *Courage*, and People sometimes protest their Innocence at the Gallows and under the Axe, when they are really guilty. They may seem also to Pray, but it is always with so ill a grace, with such Disturbance of mind, as it betrays the Cheat in the very Behavior and Comportment, and agasht countenance of the Delinquent; but 'tis worth your observation, that such people never pray for their Enemies. But when we see one Die Calm, and Serene, and Compos'd; when we hear him Praying for his Enemies *heartily*, in *clear expressions*, and *without disguise*, when we hear him renouncing not only all *hopes of Pardons*, or *Dispensations*, or *after-Absolutions*, but even the hopes of his Salvation, and the comforts of another Life, upon the very brink of this, we cannot, I say, in Conscience, or Reason, or common Humanity, but think him to be what he professes himself, Innocent of the Fact or Design for which he Dyes; we cannot but think him full

full of Grace and Courage, of Faith and Power.

Thus STEPHEN, thus every Martyr suffered, and every one who suffers thus, is a MARTYR; and if the Sinner desires to share in their Glory, he must not refuse his portion of suffering, but he cannot suffer to his advantage, as St. Austin observes, unless he pray for his Enemies. *Invictè nullo modo pugnaveris, nisi pro tuis inimicis oraveris.* Let us conclude with St. Peters Exhortation, *Let none of you suffer as a Murtherer, or as a Thief, or an Evil-doer, &c.*

^{1 Pet. 4. 15.} *Maledicimus*
^{Vulg. Male-}
^{ficus, Montan.}
^{ramonitio.} Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, (either for the profession, or in the practice of it) Let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf. In fine, *si quid patimini propter Justitiam, if you suffer any thing for the sake of Justice and Piety;* Beati, Happy ye are, and Happy may you be, Sacred Majesty, Right Honorable and dearly Beloved Christians, In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

F I N I S.
